



## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**September 24, 2014 at 4:30 pm  
Council Chambers**

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Gil Palmer, Chairperson  
Ian Kohen, Vice Chairperson  
Trena Carter, Treasurer  
Kelly Benjamin, Secretary  
Richard Gold  
Greg Lewis

### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Rhea Baker-Ipek  
Annette Barnes  
Tony McClendon  
John Stroh

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Aida Ramirez, Director  
Molly Connor, Deputy Director  
Betsy Schuette, Secretary

---

## **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Commissioner Lewis moved that the August minutes be approved. Commissioner Gold seconded. Motion carried. August minutes were approved.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Carter reported the balance of the Donations Account as \$7019.24 with no activity since the last reporting period. The MACDA Video Grant had a beginning balance of \$15,000 with no activity since the last reporting period. **Commissioner Benjamin moved that the September Treasurer's Report be approved. Commissioner Kohen seconded. Motion carried. September Treasurer's Report was approved.**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

Commissioner Benjamin made a motion to suspend the rules and reorder the agenda so that the Action Items could be voted on prior to the presentation of the Chairperson's Report. Commissioner Carter seconded. Motion carried.

### **CHRC Co-Sponsorship of Columbus Peace Fellowship Events:**

Harvest of Empire Documentary: Sarah Grey contacted the office on behalf of the Columbus Peace Fellowship to request CHRC co-sponsor the event in name only. This movie is a documentary based on the book by Juan Gonzales who also co-directed the movie. The movie is about the reality of the shared history of Latin America and the Caribbean. Commissioners viewed a trailer about the movie. Dr. Robert Aponte, Associate Professor at IUPUI will be speaking about a book he has authored with a moderated discussion.

**Commissioner Gold made a motion for CHRC co-sponsor, in name only, the *Harvest of Empire* Documentary event with the caveat that Director Ramirez have a better understanding of the event and that CHRC is supportive of the public dialogue that brings greater understanding for educational purposes. Commissioner Benjamin seconded. Motion carried.**

"How Human Rights can build Haiti and how we can help" Seminar by Professor Fran Quigley: Fran Quigley was a professor and mentor to Director Ramirez at IU in Indianapolis. Professor Quigley's lecture will be held November 10<sup>th</sup> and Sarah Grey contacted the office on behalf of the Columbus Peace Fellowship to request CHRC co-sponsorship in name only. In addition, several other community organizations are co-sponsors. Advertisements will be distributed via email or by flyers similar to what was presented to the Commissioners. There will be discussion facilitated by Professor Quigley.

**Commissioner Kohen made a motion for CHRC co-sponsor, in name only, the seminar with Professor Fran Quigley as an educational opportunity with the community. Commissioner Carter seconded. Motion carried.**

## **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Chairperson Palmer announced to the Commission his resignation as Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission effective at the conclusion of the meeting. Chairperson Palmer expressed his appreciation to everyone with the Commission. He also expressed his desire to remain as a Commissioner as long as City Council will allow. Chairperson Palmer expressed his desire to remain active and involved but feels it's in the best interest for the Commission and believes change is good. Chairperson Palmer stated that with a new Director and Deputy Director, as well as a new Commissioner coming on board, they will bring new energies and insight. Chairperson Palmer is grateful to the Commission for having the confidence in him to be Chair, which is both flattering and humbling. Pursuant to the Rules & Regulations (III)(B)(3), Vice Chair Ian Kohen will become the new Chair. At the next meeting there will be nominations and elections for Vice Chairperson to serve until the end of the term at the next elections.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **CASEWORK:**

Director Ramirez asked the Commission to join her in applause for Chairperson Palmer. Director Ramirez reported the office is continuing to stay busy with case work. The following is the case activity that occurred:

#### **Phone intake:**

- 1 FMLA in Employment-Several communications regarding FMLA, drug testing at employment, prescription insurance issues, short term disability. Complainant alleges retention of attorney and communication with ICRC, this is outside HRC jurisdiction.
- 1 City Employee-Followed up with citizen complaint with City employees, had previously provided resources and redirected to Human Resources.
- 1 Disability Accommodation in Employment- provided resources-outside HRC jurisdiction.
- 1 Age Discrimination in Employment, scheduled for future intake
- 1 Familial Status in housing, did not want to file a complaint, preferred resources for future reference.

#### **Scheduled in-person intake:**

- 1 Technical Assist for Age Discrimination in Employment, drafting letter to employer
- 1 Disability Accommodation in Employment, Outside HRC jurisdiction, provided resources.
- 1 National Origin in Housing, alleges wrongful eviction, ongoing case.
- 1 Discrimination in Education and Public Accommodation, several contacts, provided resources for future references.
- 1 Disability Accommodation in Employment, several contacts, pro se EEOC complaint pending, not filed with CHRC, ongoing.
- 1 National Origin in Housing, several contacts.
- 1 Hostile working environment, not actionable at this time, provided resources.
- 1 FMLA and Sexual Harassment in Employment, termination while on FMLA, referred to an attorney, outside CHRC jurisdiction.
- 1 Sexual Orientation in Public Accommodation, ongoing.

#### **Technical assists:**

- 1 Age in Employment, not actionable, tech assist drafting letter to employer.

#### **Other:**

- Apartment infestation, referred to Health Department
- City Employee issues in Employment referred to Human Resources.
- Complaint regarding Wi-Fi network name that disparaged ethnic group.
- Church vandalism, several contacts, Islam/Muslim Community relations.

## **COMMISSION:**

- Director Ramirez reported that at the City Council meeting held September 16<sup>th</sup>, Human Rights liaison Tim Shuffett made a motion to appoint Sameer Samudra as the new Human Rights Commissioner. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried. Sameer will receive his oath of office sometime in October by Mayor Brown and will be present at the next Commission meeting in October. Sameer is employed at Cummins and is a master six sigma black belt. Sameer has several ties with the Commission, having helped with the six sigma project Human Rights had done and has volunteered with the Commission in the past.

## **OFFICE:**

- Deputy Director Connor was interviewed on August 28<sup>th</sup> by a reporter at the Republic.
- Director Ramirez and Deputy Director Connor attended a meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup> with Mary Stroh and Chief Rohde regarding the recruitment of minority police officers. Director Ramirez reported that the meeting went well and hopes to continue that relationship so more women and minorities can be recruited. Recruitment methods and locations as well as retention and passing of the exams seem to be a road blocks to recruitment.
- Director Ramirez reported last month that Stone Belt was interested in curating art at City Hall. On August 29<sup>th</sup> Director Ramirez met with Leslie Green, CEO at Stone Belt, several other representatives, and one of the artists at City Hall. They came to City Hall to survey possible locations to hang the art. Those locations include the area outside Mayor Brown's office as well as in the Human Rights Commission. Director Ramirez reported that very soon City Hall will have some art from some very talented artists.
- On September 5<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Director Connor and Commissioners Palmer and Benjamin attended the Shoulder to Shoulder planning session at IUPUC and the Shoulder to Shoulder assembly on the steps of City Hall on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Director Ramirez participated by making brief statements regarding the serious acts of violence.
- Secretary Schuette attended an Administrative Assistant Conference at the Clarion on September 9<sup>th</sup>.
- On September 10<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Director Connor attended the Interfaith Forum meeting.
- Director Ramirez and Deputy Director Connor attended the Sustained Dialogue Sessions sponsored by the Interfaith Forum held at Ivy Tech on September 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Deputy Director Connor and Secretary Schuette represented the Commission by attending the 9/11 tribute on the front steps of City Hall on September 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Director Ramirez attended the wake of Rex Breeden. Mr. Breeden was an instrumental local entrepreneur in integrating Columbus in the 60's and 70's.
- October 1<sup>st</sup> Director Ramirez will be participating in an INDOT Title VI audit for the City of Columbus. Director Ramirez stated she understands they will be discussing federal highway dollars and how City of Columbus is managing and complying with Title VI efforts.
- Director Ramirez and Deputy Director Connor will begin participation in IUPUC Diversity Circles, which begin on October 8<sup>th</sup> and runs for 5 weeks.
- Staff will continue Director's meetings, City Council meetings and Board of Works meetings.

## Discussion during Director's Report:

Commissioner Gold asked if the budget had been approved. Director Ramirez stated that Human Rights presented a flat budget on August 7<sup>th</sup> to City Council. September 16<sup>th</sup> at the City Council meeting the salary ordinance and budget were tabled. Director Ramirez stated that she was informed that they need to be approved by a certain date according to State Statute otherwise 2015 would have the same budget as 2014. Commissioner Gold mentioned that he was informed that Rex Breeden's history working in housing in the city sounded pretty significant back in the day and wondered if the Commission could consider him for an award for his contributions to the community. Community members had been awarded the Laws award posthumously. Director Ramirez reported having brought back the pamphlet from the wake with the intention of printing it in the Annual Report.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES-NETWORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY/EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY:**

### **CSA New Tech:**

- Director Ramirez was asked by 2 teachers at CSA New Tech to speak to 94 juniors and kick off their Civics Series and talk about Human Rights. Director Ramirez stated they discussed landlord/tenant issues, restrictive covenants, and employment issues and learned a lot by speaking to the students. Director Ramirez stated the teachers from New Tech have asked for Director Ramirez to come back with some Commissioners, who volunteer, to survey their work. Director Ramirez gave them an overview of what the Commission does, talk about general civics as well as issues relevant to them and others in Columbus. Based on that lecture and other information supplemented by the teachers, they will write a college readiness paper. They have 2 requirements and one of those being on civil rights movements. Director Ramirez charged them with helping her with educating the public and helping others advocate for themselves. They will come up with some ideas and Director Ramirez and Commissioners will go back to New Tech to critique their projects. Director Ramirez will send the email to the Commissioners with the information.

### **CITY HALL:**

- Ashley Klinger was hired as the new Associate Planner in the Planning Department.

### **UPCOMING:**

- September 27<sup>th</sup>: Mill Race Marathon
- October 1<sup>st</sup>: Lt. Matt Myers retirement reception.
- October 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>: Ethnic Expo and the host country is Mexico.
- October 15<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>: *Harvest of Empire* documentary.
- October 16<sup>th</sup>: Audit & Review Committee
- October 28<sup>th</sup>: MACDA video release party from 5:30 pm-7:30 pm with speaker James Emmett, location TBD.

### **LIAISON REPORTS**

- Commissioner Lewis- no report.
- Commissioner Baker-Ipek- no report.
- Commissioner Stroh- no report.
- Commissioner Barnes- no report.

### **DISCUSSION**

- Commissioner Baker-Ipek informed Director Ramirez of her intention to discontinue her position as liaison for Interfaith Forum. Director Ramirez brought forth the information to the Commissioners for a volunteer for liaison or if a liaison needs to be appointed. Director Ramirez also inquired if staff needs to attend the meetings as interim to continue the relationship between the Commission and Interfaith Forum. Discussion ensued. Director Ramirez will send an email to the Commissioners for any interested in volunteering. The Interfaith Forum meetings are the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Main Source Bank on the west side.
- Director Ramirez asked if there were any Commissioners interested in volunteering to go with her to CSA New Tech to critique the students' presentations. The date of their presentations is October 23<sup>rd</sup> with the first session of presentations at 8:10 a.m. and the second session of presentations at 2:05 p.m. Director Ramirez will also be sending out an email to the Commissioners for any interested in volunteering to attend.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**No quorum to adjourn.**